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Comment: Writing in the 8 November 1952 issue of the Egyptian newspaper Akhbar al-Yawm on the plight of the Palestine Arab refugees, Muhammad at-Tabli, a prominent Egyptian journalist, stated that the best solution is the one advocated by the late King Abdullah. This called for resettling the refugees along the borders of Israel and thereby keeping alive in them the spirit of revenge. Since Israel refuses to accept these refugees, the writer said, and since the Arab states are not prepared to wage war against Israel and "wipe (Israel) off the face of the map," thus forcing the refugees return and solving the Palestine problem, the above solution is held as the best one.

The editorial is significant in that (1) it is the first of its kind to appear in the press of the Arab World suggesting such a bold and drastic step and (2) it differs from the general Arab viewpoint of solving the refugee problem. Furthermore, since the article appears in such an influential newspaper as Akhbar al-Yawa it is perhaps an indication of a compromise solution to this problem by Egypt. Egypt's views on this subject have been identical until now with those of the other Arab states in insisting on repatriation of the refugees and in implementing UN resolutions concerning them, as well as other matters connected with the Palestine problem, which Israel has refused to carry out.

Also of significance is the fact that al-Tabrizi had always been a bitter critic of the late King Abdullah.

A summary of at-Tab's editorial follows /

What is the solution to the refugee problem?

The Arab leaders who were responsible for the loss of Palestine say that the solution is the return of the refugees to their homes in the heart of Israel.

How can this be achieved?

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1. By Israel's agreeing and submitting to it? This is impossible, because Israel has consistently refused to let the refugees return to their homes, despite UN resolutions to that effect. The UN, meanwhile, could do nothing, because Israel is "Truman's spoiled baby" and because the UN is an "obedient tool in the hands of the US, which directs it and guides it as it /the US/ pleases."

Those Arabs who expect the new Republican administration to turn the White House policy upside down and to turn its back on Israel are entertaining false hopes.

The most that the Arabs can hope for is that Eisenhower becomes less hostile to the Arabs and less appeasing to the Zionists, and, unlike Truman, "who was a tool in the hands of the Zionists," to "free himself from Zionist domination of White House policy."

Neither Israel, then, nor the US, the UN, Great Britain, or the rest who created, aided, and assisted Israel can be expected to accept or support the principle of letting the refugees return to their homes.

2. Can the refugees be resettled by force, that is, by the Arab states waging a war to wipe Israel off the face of the map?

The Arab states are not ready today to take such a step for several reasons:

There are those who do not wish to antagonize the US; there are those who are subservient to London; there are those who do not wish to offend France; and there are those who are always ready to contribute promises and empty talk, but who, when the worst happens, refuse to contribute a single soldier for Palestine. The Arab states simply are not prepared and do not desire to wage such a war on Israel at this time.

Perhaps that day will come. All we can do is to pray for the end of causes for dispute, for clear hearts, for uniting the purposes of the Arab states, and for providing them with the means of power for revenge to eradicate Israel and retrieve Palestine for its owners.

But until that day comes, shall the refugees remain dispersed, scattered, and suffering from disease, misery, and hunger?

3. The best solution to the problem is that advocated by the late King Abdullah of Jordan, which calls for resettling the Arab refugees along the borders of Israel.

King Abdullah believed that it is most dangerous for the Arab cause to have the refugees return to their homes in Israel, and the wisest step is to keep those one million Arabs outside Israel. King Abdullah reasoned that their return to Israel would, with the passing of time, make the refugees forget their Arabism and their cause. They would be crushed by Israeli laws and assimilated into the population of Israel or, at best, they would be relegated to the category of a "loyal minority" or a "peaceful minority," accepting Israeli rule and cooperating with their "fellow countrymen" the Jews of Israel.

However, if the refugees remain outside Israel, it would be possible for the Arab states bordering Israel to distribute and absorb them. Thus, Israel would be surrounded by a wall of hatred, embitterment, and readiness for revenge.

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Then we will say to these refugees, and our children will say to their children: "Look across the borders! There is your country and your fathers' country. There is Palestine, which the Jews usurped from you. Prepare for the appointed day when you shall attack across the borders, eject the usurpers from your homes, and cleanse with your blood the shame of defeat and all that went with it."

If the UN, which contributes about 30 million dollars annually for relief to the refugees, donates 200-300 million dollars, and if the Arab states, who contribute millions of dollars yearly for relief purposes each make a lump-sum donation, then Jordan and Syria, as well as Lebanon and Egypt, can easily absorb these refugees by reclaiming lands for their resettlement, establishing industries for their employment, providing them with homes, and guaranteeing for them the means of a decent life.

Thus, the refugees can be provided with a temporary home, an Arab home which would safeguard their Arabism and keep alive in them the spirit of vengeance and that of recapturing their usurped land.

That was the opinion of King Abdullah Ibn al-Husayn; and it is the wisest opinion. May God have mercy on his soul and forgive me for some of the things I wrote about him.

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